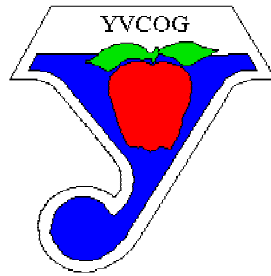


*Yakima Valley
Conference Of Governments
A Metropolitan And Regional Transportation Planning Organization*



State Fiscal Year 2002
ANNUAL REPORT

July 31, 2002

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A Regional and Metropolitan Planning Organization

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Introduction

This report details how the Yakima Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), and the Yakima Valley Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) used state and federal transportation planning funds during state fiscal year (SFY) 2002; a chart showing the combined fiscal year calendars may be found in *Appendix A*. This annual report lists all work completed during SFY 2002, and identifies revenue sources utilized from the state, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), as well as the corresponding, required local match amounts.

The Annual Report relates directly to the SFY 2002 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). The UPWP outlines the planning tasks to be completed during each fiscal year and functions as a set of performance measures for the planning activities reported in this document.

Description Of The Region

Yakima County is Washington State's second largest county comprising an area nearly 4,300 square miles in size with 222,581 inhabitants residing within its jurisdictional boundaries. Most of its residents live in three distinct geographical areas that align with our major arterial roadways and river drainage systems. They are: the Upper Yakima Valley, the City of Yakima, and the Lower Yakima Valley. Distinct ridges define these areas forming natural boundaries separating each other.



Fourteen cities, towns and unincorporated communities are located within the County's

jurisdiction itself. Primarily the cities and urban growth areas of Yakima, Union Gap, Selah, and Moxee define the metropolitan area of this region. The remainder of the county, including its small cities and towns, defines the rural area. The Yakama Nation borders Yakima County to the southwest. An MPO/RTPO planning boundaries map is found in *Appendix B*.

Yakima County has experienced a significant amount of growth from 1990 to 2000, with the County population increasing in the decade by 33,758 persons, or nearly 18 percent, from 188,823 to 222,581. All of this population growth was fueled by significant increases in minority populations as follows:

- **Hispanic Population**
The Hispanic population in Yakima County is outstripping all other racial or ethnic groups in overall population growth; it has increased by 34,791 persons (a 77 percent increase) from 45,114 in 1990 to a population of 79,905 in 2000.
- **The Non-Hispanic White Population**
The non-Hispanic White population decreased by 6,414 persons (a drop of 5 percent) from 132,147 in 1990 to 125,733 in 2000. (*Source: 2000 US Census*)

This growth in minority population reinforces the trend of the last three decades, which is a movement towards a more racially and ethnically diverse population in Yakima County. This trend towards increased diversity will have a significant impact on the transportation needs and their link to the economic vitality of the Yakima Valley in the coming years.

YVCOG MPO/RTPO STRUCTURE

The Yakima Valley Conference of Governments (YVCOG) is the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the region, as well as the state-designated Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO). As the MPO/RTPO, the YVCOG is the lead-planning agency for work specified in the annual *Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)*, and evaluated in this report.

The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) advises the YVCOG MPO/RTPO Executive Board on technical issues. The TAC is made up of planning and engineering staff from the member jurisdictions, WSDOT South Central Region, the Yakama Nation, Yakima City Transit, and a representative from the agricultural and business communities. Transportation policy matters related to the overall region are the responsibility of the Yakima Valley RTPO Executive Committee. The eight-member RTPO Executive Committee includes the five YVCOG Executive Committee members with the addition of representatives from WSDOT South Central Region, Yakima Valley Business Community, and the Agricultural sector. A YVCOG organizational chart is found in *Appendix C*.

Summary: 2002 Accomplishments

The Yakima Valley Conference of Governments met and exceeded goals set in the SFY 2002 UPWP. But in addition to completing all routine tasks and successfully submitting the 2002-2004 TIP the YVCOG's focus throughout 2002 was positioning itself for a comprehensive update of the Yakima Valley Metropolitan and regional Transportation Plan.

The end of SFY 2001 the YVCOG faced several challenges before considering a comprehensive update of the plan in 2002. We needed to continue building effective partnerships, review our current regional transportation plan, update our current traffic model, and resolve air quality conformity issues. Finally, the YVCOG staff needed training in current modeling techniques in order to assist in the update, and run the updated traffic model.

Accomplishing these tasks in 2002 allows the YVCOG to go ahead with our comprehensive plan update for 2003. Below is an overview of the tasks performed and objectives met in SFY 2002.

Partnerships

Economic Vitality: The YVCOG and WSDOT South Central Region Office successfully launched a creative partnership to better coordinate transportation planning, land use, and economic development in the Yakima Region. It is hoped that input from local and regional transportation decision-makers will allow the region as a whole to make transportation investment decisions upon how a particular project contributes to the economic vitality of the region.

Alternative Transportation Modes: The YVCOG and its CTR Program, partnering with WSDOT South Central Region, successfully erected 12 RideShare signs along major arterial commute routes throughout the Yakima Valley.

Working with Yakima City Transit, the YVCOG's CTR Program saw the Transit *RideShare/Smart Moves* promotion increase its participation close to 400% over previous years. Working with the City of Yakima, Department of Ecology, WSDOT SCR and others, the Gateway Park and Ride lot was dedicated in a ceremony mid-March. Already, three vanpools are using the site, which also links the location to Yakima Transit. The MPO's Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) Program serves as the foundation for the expanded demand strategies program.

Concurrency and Mapping: The YVCOG successfully used GIS technology and staff expertise in crafting an array of maps and special planning tools enabling our smaller member jurisdictions to meet state and federal mandates regarding update of the transportation land use linkage elements of their plans.

Regional Transportation Plan Update

On February 20, 2002 the YVCOG MPO/RTPO Executive Committee accepted the review of the regional portion of the Yakima Valley Area Transportation Plan. A diagram of the planning cycle can be found in *Appendix C*. The plan was found to be adequate and continues to meet the planning needs of the region as follows:

1. The adopted plan continues to foster cooperative development of a six-year *Regional Transportation Improvement Program* (RTIP) based upon the programs, projects, and transportation demand management measures of regional significance identified by Yakima City Transit, member jurisdictions, Yakima County, WSDOT, public transportation providers, and the Yakama Nation (RCW 35.58.2795, 35.77.010, and 36.81.121).
2. The adopted plan continues to provide effective strategies for developing and reviewing level of service standards for the region;
3. The adopted plan continues to promote a consistent regional evaluation of transportation facilities, services, and corridors pursuant to RCW 36.70A;
4. The adopted plan continues to provide an effective and efficient tool in making regional capital investment decisions;
5. The adopted plan continues to provide significant opportunities for public participation early in the planning and programming process, and allows for seamless integration of Census 2000 demographic information to assist the region in achieving its transportation goals.

Traffic Model Update

Working with the City of Yakima, the YVCOG successfully negotiated the update of the Metropolitan Traffic Model in partnership with the City of Yakima. The update will benefit all of our member jurisdictions, and has been launched with the city assuming the project lead and providing the matching funds. The YVCOG provided the base funding, \$35,000 in STP planning funds, and is supplying staff support.

Staff Training

The YVCOG hosted a weeklong workshop on TModel training for interested jurisdictions, agencies throughout the state in June 2002. This training session was an excellent opportunity to introduce new staff to the modeling process as well as afford those with experience a refresher. TModel is the lynch pin of Yakima Valley's traffic modeling as well as for air quality conformity determination in the region.

Origin and Destination Study, Phase I and Phase II

The YVCOG successfully completed *Phase I* of an Origin and Destination Study in 2002 and has now partnered with Yakima County to complete *Phase II*. Yakima County is assuming the project lead and providing the matching funds. The YVCOG provided the

base funding of \$120,000 in STP planning funds, and is supplying staff support; WSDOT South Central Region contributed and additional \$10,000 towards the study.

Phase II RFP has been issued with proposals due August 2, 2002 at Noon to Yakima County Public Works. This final the Origin and Destination Study to be completed in late fall 2002.

Collaborative Problem–Solving: Air Quality Conformity

The YVCOG had difficulty demonstrating air quality conformity for the third year in a row. The YVCOG initiated a collaborative effort to construct a modeling solution that accurately quantified and demonstrated the continuing improvement in air quality for the metropolitan area. (*See Appendix D.*)

Partnering with the Washington State Department of Ecology (DOE), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Yakima Regional Clean Air Authority (YRCAA), and the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), we successfully crafted a short-term solution. This revised modeling technique allowed us to demonstrate conformity for the 2002-2004 TIP and provides a 5-year margin. This margin allows us time to develop a long-term solution, which may include a PM₁₀ maintenance plan, and an amendment to the State Implementation Plan (SIP).

Air Quality Education and Outreach Program

The YVCOG secured \$35,000 in Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Program funding to develop and implement an education and public outreach program promoting demand management strategies for the Yakima Metropolitan Area. The focus of this program is two-fold: first, to educate elected leadership and the general public about the air quality impacts of the transportation plan and program and; second, to promote and support application of transportation demand management strategies.

SFY 2002 Budget -- Summary

The following information summarizes the tasks completed by the Yakima Valley Conference of Governments which were included as part of the *Unified Planning Work Program* (UPWP) for SFY 2002 (July 1, 2001 to June 30, 2002). The Yakima Valley Conference of Governments received funding in SFY 2002 from the several sources; these sources are listed in *Appendix E*.

Expenditures include federal, state and local funds, which were budgeted as part of the UPWP. Any overruns were absorbed as part of the local matching funds and regionally approved STP planning funds. A Financial Summary may be found in *Appendix F*.

Task I – Administration

Routine accomplishments under this task include:

1. MPO/RTPO Program management,
2. Supervision of staff,
3. Preparation of meeting agendas and minutes,
4. Record keeping,
5. Preparation of reports,
6. Grant management,
7. Coordination of transportation planning activities between YVCOG and other
8. agencies, and attendance at meetings,
9. Maintenance of the YVCOG web site with current transportation information.

Task II – Short Range Planning

Routine accomplishments under this task include:

1. Completion of the 2002-2004 Transportation Improvement Program and amendments,
2. Completion of the SFY02 UPWP,
3. Distribution of additional FY01 STP Regional and state funds,
4. Revision of the RTP STP allocation process,
5. Distribution of estimated FY02 STP Regional funds,
6. Congestion and Air Quality Mitigation (CMAQ) fund project selection and funding distribution,
7. MPO Certification,
8. Consistency review process development for RTPO member jurisdictions,
9. Assistance to the City of Yakima in DBE program review,
10. Preparation of annual budget.

Task III – Long Range Planning

Routine accomplishments under this task include:

1. Coordination of efforts by Yakima County, the City of Yakima, WSDOT, and other RTPO member jurisdictions and agencies in a comprehensive regional transportation planning effort;
2. Review and determination of adequacy of the RTPO plan, launching the update of the MPO plan, and participation in regional economic vitality activities.

Task IV – Data Management & Forecasting

Routine accomplishments under this task include:

1. Air quality analysis of transportation projects for CO and for PM₁₀
2. Compilation and analysis of demographic and socioeconomic data provided by the 2000 Census,

3. Assist MPO member jurisdictions with traffic counts,
4. Specialized transportation planning and technical support activities (as requested for member jurisdictions)
5. Responded to requests for input into the SEPA review process, and
6. Partnered with Yakima County and the City of Yakima on transportation planning and land use issues relative to data management and product output.

Expectations for SFY 2003

We will continue to enrich our interaction with membership, agencies, organizations, and civic representatives such as the Yakima Area Chamber of Commerce, the Yakima Regional Clean Air Authority, Yakima Community Development Association, and WSDOT South Central Region – all critical to the mission of the Yakima Valley Conference of Governments. We will do this through active outreach activities such as face-to-face meetings, on site visits, open house hosting, and informational workshops.

1. Coordination

We will continue to expand our involvement in coordinating and supporting the efforts of groups such as People for People, Work First, and the Yakima Transportation Coalition in efforts to meet the transportation needs of underserved populations within Yakima Valley. We will utilize census data to identify these populations, and an Origin and Destination Study to include specific questions that will identify these populations as well as their specific transportation needs. We will continue, and expand, our assistance to smaller jurisdictions with compliance issues and analysis needs relative to environmental concerns.

2. Management and Operations

The YVCOG sees a challenge in recruiting and retaining highly qualified professionals and technical staff. We intend to maintain, and exceed, our current high level of service to our membership, while meeting the new challenges inherent in governance changes, and “bottom up” state planning demands.

3. Equity

The YVCOG will continue its commitment to equity by assuring that Title VI considerations and environmental justice concerns are incorporated into all levels of the planning process. The centerpiece of this strategy is an enriched public participation program that encompasses continued and inclusive partnering, and early involvement in decision-making processes.

4. Regional Vision and Economic Vitality

The YVCOG will continue to encourage strategic thinking among its membership and to foster a regional perspective among the YVCOG membership. Additionally, the YVCOG is partnering with WSDOT SCR in an economic vitality process involving local jurisdictions, business and community leaders, and the Yakama nation. This process seeks to link land use, and economic development efforts to the effectiveness and efficiency of our transportation system and facilities.

In order to provide a comprehensive and concurrent program for our member jurisdictions, these values are integrated throughout the entire planning process – from the program level to the project level as follows:

1. Program Level

- Encourage our membership to think strategically as well as locally and actively incorporate the values embodied within our strategic planning goals for SFY 2003 into each project it undertakes in the coming fiscal year;
- Provide a venue and policy context for collaborative policy formation and needs identification with local officials, especially in the STIP process;
- Enhance and expand partnership opportunities with WSDOT South Central Region;
- Support the integration of environmental streamlining and the programming activities of the YVCOG on behalf of its member jurisdictions;
- Support the visions and goals of the current update of the Washington State Transportation Plan, and the additional priority of adding local value to this process;
- Research and develop funding resources for YVCOG management and operation needs in order to recruit and retain high quality professional staff to better serve our members.

2. Planning Level

- Establish an ad hoc policy advisory group which will serve to enrich and expand the public involvement program at YVCOG assuring that all *Title VI* and environmental justice goals are addressed early in the planning stage;
- Assure that environmental streamlining is incorporated, where appropriate, early in the planning process;
- Assure that issues of safety and related concerns are addressed early in the

planning process.

3. Project Level

- Partner with the Yakima Regional Clean Air Authority to develop an air quality PM₁₀ maintenance plan;
- Complete update of the Yakima Valley Region and Metropolitan Area Transportation Plan;
- Update and expand the metropolitan traffic model.

These planning priorities will allow the YVCOG to provide a planning process for the MPO/RTPO that support the projects and strategies necessary to meet the needs and service expectations of the region, the metro area, and our individual members.